

VZCZCXYZ0016
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHVI #1358 2601442
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 161442Z SEP 08
FM AMEMBASSY VIENNA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0955
INFO RUEAEP/EP/EP WASHDC

UNCLAS VIENNA 001358

SIPDIS

STATE FOR OES/GC
EPA FOR OIA (ALMEIDA)

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [SENV](#) [EAID](#) [ENRG](#) [AU](#)

SUBJECT: WORLD WATER CONGRESS HIGHLIGHTS CLIMATE CHANGE

11. SUMMARY: From September 7 to 11, Vienna hosted the World Water Congress / trade show highlighting the impact of climate change on water issues. Organized by the International Water Association (IWA), the event brought together around 3,000 experts from science / technology, water policy, water supply / sewage, and industry. Billed as a "mega congress" in Vienna, the event's plenaries and 110 workshops were a useful forum to discuss the full range of water management issues, the water/energy nexus, and particularly the repercussions of climate change on water supply. A prominent speaker criticized EU policies promoting biofuels and hydropower due to their negative effects on water availability. END SUMMARY.

12. The U.S. was well represented on the scientific/ industry level, led by IWA vice president (and Senior VP of CH2MHill, a leading U.S. engineering and consulting firm) Glen Daigger. Twenty-eight Americans chaired workshops, and there was one U.S. keynote speaker. At the trade show, the U.S. was represented by the American Water Works Association, a non-profit organization founded by U.S. utilities. Government organizations such as the Austrian Development Agency, Canada, South Korea, the European Bank for Reconstruction, and UN organizations used the opportunity to present their water policies and programs.

13. In his opening speech, Daigger said that water management must be transformed to serve cities of the future. The big challenge will be to recycle water and to gain social acceptance for recycled drinking water. Nature has always recycled water, and we will soon need to do the same in human settlements, he said.

14. In a keynote speech on climate change, Pavel Kabat (Wageningen University) focused on the repercussions of hurricanes, floods, droughts, and altered precipitation patterns. Climate change is already the cause of 20 percent of water scarcity worldwide, he said. This will be a huge challenge for designing water management systems. Kabat criticized that some EU plans aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions, such as expanding biofuels and hydropower production, might have negative effects on the natural water balance.

15. Abel Mejia from the World Bank said that developing countries "are poorer than we think" particularly in sub-Saharan countries, where around 50% of the population is poor (a number has not changed in two decades). A main factor in poverty is lack of water supply and sanitation. IWA and WHO have been installing so-called Water Safety Plans (WSPs) in every region where poor water supply leads to disease, but the programs suffer from lack of financing.

16. Other interesting facts from the congress:

- There will always be around 1.4 bcm fresh water on the earth, but it is a scarce commodity because humans pollute it and use it increasingly for producing of goods and food
- 93 percent of freshwater is used in agriculture. A big challenge of the future is to produce food with less water. 30% of water in industrial countries, and 70% in developing countries gets lost due to bad infrastructure. At least 15% can be saved with simple measures, according to the World Bank.
- In 2050, sixty states will suffer from water scarcity. 1.2 billion

people already live in water-scarce regions.

- Every day, 6,000 people in least developed countries die from lack of access to clean water.

GIRARD-DICARLO#